

## Arkansas River Trash Round-Up: Wet but Not Washed Out

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On May 6, the city of Wichita held its annual Arkansas River Trash Round-Up. This event falls near Earth Day each spring and serves partially to prepare the city for the Wichita River Festival. The Trash Round-Up was coordinated by Libby Albers, Environmental Specialist at the Wichita Water Center.

Volunteers from various community groups and businesses picked up debris scattered on the banks of the Arkansas River. Braving the intermittent rain on a gray, dreary day to contribute to their community were such groups as the Sierra Club, the North Riverside Neighborhood Association, the Arkansas River Coalition, Spirit Aerosystems, the City of Wichita and KDHE's South Central District Office (SCDO).



**The SCDO Cleanup Crew**

Five members of the SCDO (along with one additional recruit, not pictured) went down to the riverbank with the other volunteers that misty morning, sporting bright blue rubber gloves on their hands and huge trash bags stuffed in their pockets. The different groups started at various points along the river so that they could cover as much territory as possible. The KDHE volunteers worked with another group along the riverfront that passes through downtown Wichita by the historic

Wichita Boathouse and just south of the Hyatt Regency Hotel with its beautiful landscaping and fountains.

For over two hours, the volunteers walked the banks of the river, picking up paper cups, plastic wrappers, broken pieces of styrofoam, and other debris from the river's edge. They pulled out logs, tires, and even carpet from the water. City workers canvassed the area with trash trucks and picked up the bags and piles of logs that were collected.

**At Right: Betty Grindol, KDHE Immunization Nurse Consultant (left), and Michael Jones, South Central District Office DEA (right), help carry a log from the Arkansas River.**





**Meer Husain, Professional Geologist,** combs through the river and rakes in debris.

At times during the morning, the clouds opened up and poured out big droplets, apparently trying to help the effort by filling the river up with clean water. The soggy volunteers cheerfully worked with nature to restore beauty to the banks of the river. The extra moisture did add a challenge in that the edge of the river was muddy and soft. This made it difficult to get close to the water's edge to pull items from the river. Long-handled tools such as the one shown made the work safer and easier.

After more than two hours of labor, the weary workers turned their gazes upriver, from the dark storm clouds in the south to the glistening, scenic banks of the Arkansas River. It took no effort to see what a difference their labor had made.



**Caroline Gasper, Administrative Assistant (right),** and her recruit, **Chris Cynova,** show off their catch from the river.



**John P. Goetz, P.E., Dist. Water Engineer,** and **Kay Johnson, City of Wichita Director of Environmental Services,** looking a little wet.

A complete cleanup project, of course, would take much more than one morning; however, much progress was made and the difference was visible. Approximately 1.72 tons of trash were removed along the banks of the Arkansas River that wet day!